

PSORIASIS

## ELEVATED SELF-DISGUST IN PSORIASIS PATIENTS

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**Introduction:** Psoriasis is a chronic, immune-mediated skin disease associated with significant psychosocial disability. Previous neuroimaging work by our group suggested that psoriasis patients have an attenuated response to disgust which may represent a coping mechanism of 'blocking out' disgusted facial expressions of others. Little is known about self-reported disgust responses in psoriasis patients and specifically disgust directed to oneself (self-disgust).

**Objective:** A questionnaire study to explore disgust responses in psoriasis patients.

**Materials and Methods:** Data were collected from 100 psoriasis patients attending a tertiary psoriasis clinic (55 % female; mean age 45yrs) and 100 age matched ( $\pm 5$ yrs) controls. Questionnaires included assessments of disgust processing (Disgust Propensity Sensitivity Scale-Revised [DPSS-R]; Self-Disgust Scale [SDS] comprising 2 subscales: 'ways' (disgust towards behaviour) and 'self' (disgust towards physical self) and mood (Health Anxiety Depression Scale [HADS]; Dermatology Life Quality Index [DLQI] and Perceived Stigmatisation Questionnaire [PSQ]). Psoriasis severity was assessed by Psoriasis Area Severity Index (PASI).

**Results:** Psoriasis patients (mean 15.93) scored higher than controls (11.52) on HADS ( $p < 0.05$ ) and SDS (psoriasis, 34.97; controls, 29.43;  $p < 0.05$ ). There was no significant difference in DPSS-R between controls and patients ( $p > 0.05$ ). In psoriasis patients, SDS positively correlated with HADS scores ( $r = 0.66$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ); PSQ ( $r = 0.63$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and DPSS-R ( $r = 0.38$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The SDS 'self' sub-scale, representing disgust towards physical self, correlated with PASI ( $r = 0.34$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and DLQI ( $r = 0.48$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). DPSS-R correlated with



DLQI in the patient group ( $r=0.29$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

Conclusions: Psoriasis patients reported higher levels of depression and anxiety than controls with the mean anxiety subscale above the clinical threshold. Elevated levels of self-disgust were also reported by patients, which correlated with disease severity and decreased quality of life. Self-disgust may be an important part of the emotional response to living with psoriasis and more work is needed to explore the utility of emotion-based interventions for patients.

